

## Delegates discuss Native 8(a) programs

By Diana Haecker

The Native American Contractor's Association and the newly formed Native 8(a) Works group hosted breakout sessions under the title of "Tribal consultation on government contracting: 8(a) programs nuts and bolts" behind closed doors Oct. 22-23 during the annual Alaska Federation of Natives Conference.

The consultations were closed to reporters to allow delegates to speak freely and brainstorm on guidelines and recommendations. The Small Business Administration, the agency overseeing the 8(a) program, announced plans to release new regulations within days of the conference. Particulars are not known at this point. Bering Strait Native Corp. Vice President Gail Schubert reported that discussions in the breakout sessions centered on getting Alaska Native corporations' and tribal input as to the changes that might happen.

U.S. Sen. Claire McCaskill of Mis-

souri has initiated a review of the program that allows Alaska Native corporations to enter into lucrative, sole-source, non-bid contracts with federal government agencies. While the review is ongoing, it created uncertainty. Schubert said that one agency reported that they stopped sole-source contracting as it is unknown what the new regulations will bring.

Schubert said that so far, Bering Straits Native Corp. has not lost any contracts as a consequence of the review. "We want to ensure that the 8(a) program is not shut down as it contributes significantly to the Bering Straits Foundation and other scholarships," she said. She added that revenue from 8(a) contracts provides for 80 to 90 percent of Bering Straits Native Corp.'s gross revenue, which enabled the corporation to pay a dividend of \$1.50 per share. "It is a major component of what we do," Schubert said.

The SBA is expected to release the new regulations next Tuesday.



Photos by Diana Haecker

**BERING STRAIT CAUCUS**—The Bering Straits Native Corp. caucus meets during a recess on Saturday's AFN session discussing resolutions.

## Gov. Parnell skirts subsistence, targets domestic violence

Story and photo by Diana Haecker

Only briefly acknowledging the rift in philosophies regarding this year's Alaska Federation of Natives Conference main topic—subsistence, Gov. Sean Parnell used most of his allotted time Oct. 22 speaking out to combat domestic violence statewide and pledged to work on making homes across Alaska safe.

Parnell said that this year's AFN motto "Northern Dreams, our historic journey continues" resonates with him, but he also said that this dream is fraught with despair as the occurrences of domestic violence and sexual assaults are rampant throughout the state.

Governors usually address the largest gathering of Natives in the nation talking about economics, but Parnell devoted most of his speech to the need to fight domestic violence. Parnell spoke about the social ill that he said is a statewide problem with no boundaries.

He offered to beef up law enforcement presence in the villages to add two regular trooper positions to the Nome post. He said of the 72 funded Village Public Safety Officer positions only 58 are filled and

he encouraged the crowd to help recruit among their ranks to fill the remaining jobs.

Parnell also said he wants to expand the program to fund another 15 positions statewide. Aside from increased law enforcement presence, Parnell spoke of the civic duty of each citizen to step up to the plate and to stop the passive reluctance to get involved. Parnell said it takes a statewide shift in the perception of domestic violence.

The Native Emerging Leaders also addressed the issue, and reaffirmed that domestic violence is not who they are as a Native people, and that the cycle needs to be broken. The head of the governor's rural subcommittee Alaska Attorney General Dan Sullivan also addressed the AFN and reaffirmed to clamp down on domestic violence and sexual assaults.

While the purpose of the rural subcommittee is mostly to research rural energy issues to come up with solutions, Sullivan also saw the need to address domestic violence and sexual assault.

Parnell also touched on education. "I want our young people to thrive and not just to survive," Parnell said. In order to offer a carrot



**SPEAKING UP (above)**—Gov. Sean Parnell used his 20-minute speech addressing the AFN convention speaking up against domestic violence and sexual assault crimes. He pledged to beef up law enforcement in the villages.

to break out of a cycle of what seems insurmountable challenges, he announced more details of his recently unveiled plan to institute a so-called governor's performance scholarship program. The proposal would allow students to earn tuition scholarships based on merit. He said that a straight-A student would get a 100 percent tuition scholar-

ship award, a B student would get 75 percent tuition scholarship and a

C-plus student would receive a 50 percent scholarship.

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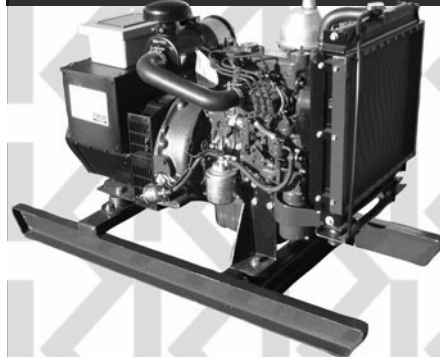
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